

515 holy place, and even today children are warned against making too much noise while bathing.

[844] In earlier times most babies were born in the sauna--a wise precaution, for the sauna is practically germ-free. Certainly the sauna has contributed much towards the traditional cleanliness of the people. It has been a valuable asset for Finnish sportsmen, and through them it has become known throughout many parts of the world. Finnish emigrants have brought the idea with them to their new homes, and in Scandinavia as well as in North America one often encounters a typical Finnish sauna.

857 By force of circumstance, Finnish children

526 become familiar from a very early age with skiing, rowing and swimming, and they also have opportunities to become experts at the

[357]traditional games of wrestling, running, tug-of-

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war, sack-racing and various ball games. A

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real interest in sports in general, however, did

not arise until the beginning of this century,

especially after the spectacular success of

Finnish long-distance runners and other athletes

in the Olympic Games in Stockholm in 1912. The

most popular sports in Finland are the ball

games, i. e. soccer, ice-hockey and the nation-

al form of baseball, after which come skiing,

track and field, gymnastics, swimming, path-

finding, wrestling and boxing, cycling and

skating. Track and field, in which Finland held

second place after the United States in all the

Olympic Games until the London event in 1948,

are the special favorites of the public, and the

large international competitions gather a large

526 number of spectators. Cross-country skiing is
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517 a real everyman's sport, popular among old
and young alike. In some rural districts skis
are still an indispensable means of communica-
tion in winter time, and near the cities there
are innumerable tracks in the forest for those
who ski for pleasure. The school children are
given a week's vacation for skiing each winter,
and older people are urged to continue their
practice.

A large number of Finnish sportsmen have
achieved international fame, especially in track
and field, skiing, wrestling and skating. They
have come from all layers of society, farmers
and workers being especially well represented
among them.

The favorite sport occasions among the